

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5323
Email: suzy.smith@tribalgroup.com

12 June 2014

Mr Andrew Denton
Headteacher
Leamore Primary School
Bloxwich Road
Walsall
WS3 2BB

Dear Mr Denton

Special measures monitoring inspection of Leamore Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10–11 June, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Walsall.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Howie
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching to good or better so that all pupils make good progress as they move through the school, by ensuring that teachers:
 - make it clear what they want pupils to learn in all lessons
 - set work that expects more of pupils which is well matched to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, particularly the most able, so all pupils are fully engaged and behave well
 - increase suitable support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those known to be eligible for the pupil premium, so they make rapid progress
 - move learning on in lessons at a brisker pace
 - check closely on pupils' progress in lessons so they know how well they are doing.

- Raise pupils' achievement in English and mathematics for all groups of pupils by:
 - improving the clarity and fluency in pupils' spoken language and of children's speaking and listening skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - ensuring pupils understand the underlying meaning in the texts that they read in different subjects to improve their reading skills
 - helping pupils extend their ideas in longer pieces of writing in English and in other subjects
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to practise their calculation skills in solving more practical and real-life mathematical problems.

- Increase the capacity of leaders, managers and governors to improve the school by making sure that:
 - senior and subject leaders make accurate and rigorous checks on the impact of teaching on the progress of different groups of pupils during lesson observations and reviews of pupils' written work
 - plans for improvement are fine-tuned to establish the key priorities in securing speedy improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement
 - the governing body has a fuller and accurate picture of the school's weaknesses and effectively challenges senior leaders to tackle them with a greater sense of urgency.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 June 2014

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documents. More than half of the lessons observed during the monitoring inspection were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. In addition to this, the inspector met with the headteacher and senior leaders, five representatives from the governing body and two local authority representatives. The inspector also heard a small sample of pupils read, spoke to groups of pupils and talked to some parents at the beginning of the school day.

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection, a part-time Year 6 teacher has left the school. A further two teachers will be leaving at the end of the summer term. A safeguarding officer is now working alongside the headteacher, undertaking some of the responsibilities associated with child protection. A new local authority governor has been appointed. Two assistant headteachers have been appointed and will take up their posts in September.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Inspection evidence confirms that for a large proportion of pupils across the school standards remain below those expected in reading, writing and mathematics. Too few children in Reception and pupils in upper Key Stage 2 are making reasonable progress. As a result, pupils are not making up lost ground to reach the standards that are expected for their age.

This lack of progress is as a result of some persistent weaknesses in teaching. Observation evidence from pupils' books shows that the most-able pupils often have to complete work that is too easy before they are moved on to harder work. In some lessons, all pupils are required to complete the same tasks. This means that the work is either too hard for some pupils, or too easy for others. This prevents pupils from making the progress of which they are capable. Progress in reading is too slow because, although the teaching of the sounds letters make (phonics) is consistent, pupils do not always understand what they have read. The quality of guided reading is inconsistent, and in some classes, it does not happen at all.

Nevertheless, some recent improvements are apparent. An increasing number of pupils in Nursery and Key Stage 1 are making the progress that is expected of them. This is because some teaching improved. As a result of some effective training, pupils' progress in writing in almost all year groups has improved. This is most notable in Year 6 where a writing programme has been introduced by the deputy headteacher and a number of pupils have made rapid progress. However, this is still not sufficient or been sustained over a long enough period of time for all pupils to make up for the poor rates of progress that they have made previously.

In mathematics, pupils are given more opportunities to use their mathematical knowledge to solve real-life problems and logic puzzles. This has been a recent development and is not yet consistent across the school.

Progress in Early Years Foundation Stage is inconsistent. Children in the Nursery are making reasonable progress, and an increasing number are making good progress. This is because activities are set at the right level, and adults are skilled at asking searching questions that help children to think carefully. Well-planned and targeted activities have enabled pupils with poor speaking and listening skills to make good progress and catch up with their classmates. For example, the 'conversation station' is ensuring that children practise talking to adults and one another on a regular basis. Progress in Reception class is slower, because teaching is inconsistent.

The quality of teaching

There is evidence that teaching has improved. However, it has not been sufficient to ensure that pupils in all year groups are making reasonable or better progress. The proportion of inadequate teaching has reduced and there is a small proportion of teaching that is now good.

In some teaching observed, pupils did not make enough progress because activities were not set at the right level of difficulty. For example, pupils are often given the same task to complete. The most-able pupils found the work too easy and those pupils who require extra help found it too difficult. Also, although teachers sometimes provided a number of different tasks for pupils to complete, they were not set at the right level. Evidence from pupils' writing and mathematics books confirms that most-able pupils are often not challenged sufficiently. The exception to this is in Years 2 and 3 where the most-able pupils are making better progress.

All teachers are now aware of the importance of keeping learning moving along briskly and it was evident that teachers are trying to implement the training they have recently received. In the most effective teaching, teachers provide pupils with clear timescales for each task. This maintains a sense of urgency and pupils get down to their work quickly. Similarly, all teachers are now displaying what they expect pupils to learn. In some classes, teachers are communicating this effectively to pupils. However, in others, pupils do not know what they are trying to learn.

Where teaching is most effective, pupils know what they have to do to be successful. For example, in one lesson, pupils created their own list of things to include in the adverts they were writing. This list was based on what they had learned previously.

Teachers' marking is inconsistent. This is partly because the school policy does not give specific enough guidance about what is expected. The most effective marking provides pupils with precise guidance about how to improve their work. For example, in some Year 6 English books, pupils regularly respond to the teacher's comments and improve

their work. Some teachers do not expect pupils to present their work neatly or take care with their handwriting.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are well supervised and generally behave sensibly around the school. Several pupils held doors open for HMI and other adults without being asked. Most pupils are courteous and polite, although a number of older children sometimes speak in an over-familiar manner to some adults.

Playtimes are busy and bustling. Pupils say that there is some name-calling and unkindness on the playground but adults deal swiftly and fairly with any incidents that arise. Pupils say they feel safe at school. Some pupils told HMI that they have concerns about football games dominating the playground. In lessons, there is very little low-level disruption. However, pupils are not always fully engaged in their learning, and while they sit quietly, they are not always concentrating on or looking at the teacher.

Senior leaders have been effective in dealing with a small number of pupils who display very challenging behaviour. This work has taken up a significant proportion of the headteacher's time. A range of support has been provided for these pupils in addition to training for some members of staff. The behaviour of most of these pupils has now improved. One pupil told the inspector that his behaviour had improved because 'the headteacher believes in me and listens to both sides of the story when things go wrong'.

The school is using appropriate systems to encourage pupils to attend regularly. Attendance remains just below the national average for primary schools.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

While the judgement made at this monitoring visit is one of insufficient progress, the headteacher has methodically and resolutely removed the barriers that would have inhibited future, and more rapid, progress. For example, he has rightly focused on increasing the capacity of the leadership team by appointing a safeguarding officer and two assistant headteachers. He has also stabilised the challenging behaviour of a small number of pupils. The headteacher has a clear and accurate understanding of the stage the school is at on the journey of improvement.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are making regular checks on the quality of teaching. Their judgements are accurate, and they are providing teachers with precise and helpful points for improvement. However, these checks do not focus sufficiently sharply on the specific areas for improvement, identified at the time of the October inspection. Additionally, each time leaders carry out a book scrutiny, they are not scrutinising pupils' workbooks from a broad enough range of year groups to ensure improvements are being made and sustained across the school.

Teachers have had the opportunity to observe teachers from other schools and have

received a good range of training both from senior leaders and from external agencies. As a result, teaching has improved. However, improvement has been slowed by the lack of clarity about what is expected to be followed up after the training activities. For example, after teachers received training on guided reading, senior leaders did not outline precisely what teachers should put into practice in their classrooms. Similarly, teachers' marking remains inconsistent, partly because the policy does not provide sufficiently precise guidance.

Effective training has resulted in improved teaching of writing. This has been most notable in Year 6 where the deputy headteacher has been effective in implementing a writing programme. She has provided effective coaching for the Year 6 teacher, and improvements in planning and marking are evident.

Some teachers who have additional responsibilities are still at the early stages of acquiring the skills needed to support and challenge teachers about the progress of pupils. Coaching support is being provided to enable them to fulfill their roles.

Actions to improve governance have at best been too slow, and at worst, have not taken place. The review of governance recommended in the inspection in October was not completed until May and most governors are not aware of the recommendations. An action plan has yet to be finalised. Additionally, the plans that were in place for governors to visit the school, as reported in the last monitoring visit, have not materialised.

However, some improvements have been made. Governors are meeting more regularly, and those who met with HMI were more knowledgeable than at the time of the last visit about pupils' progress and attainment, and about how the pupil premium funding is spent. The governing body minutes show that governors are beginning to ask the headteacher more questions. However, they remain too reliant on the headteacher for this information. As a result, they are not providing the level of challenge that is required.

External support

There has been some recent improvement in the support from the local authority. For example, an assistant headteacher has been seconded to the school beginning in September and an additional experienced governor has been appointed. The behaviour support team has given the school some advice and training. However, the reports written by some of the local authority advisers after their visits have not provided school leaders with a clear summary of their findings, nor have they made clear recommendations about the next steps that should be taken.

The headteacher has been proactive in engaging a range of external partners to increase the capacity of the leaders to make further improvement. For example, a mathematics consultant has worked alongside the mathematics subject leader to develop an action plan and has provided coaching in the analysis of information about pupils' progress.

Additionally, a consultant has been working in school one day each week to improve the provision for and progress of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and those with additional needs.